

Pilot Loan Repayment Assistance Program

Congress appropriated \$1 million for LSC's pilot loan repayment assistance program. The goals of the program are to help LSC-funded programs recruit and retain highly-qualified attorneys, and spur development of more such programs. The need is clear.

Low-paid legal aid lawyers often have large, outstanding law school loans.

- Legal aid lawyers are not only among the lowest-paid members of the legal profession, they earn less than public defenders.
- The average participant in LSC's pilot loan repayment assistance program earns \$32,000 per year.
- Program participants must repay education loans ranging from \$26,000 to \$138,000; the median is \$70,000.

LSC's pilot program provides up to \$15,000 per attorney.

- Seventy attorneys are participating in the pilot program.
- All participants had been legal aid lawyers for less than three years when the pilot program started.
- Each participant receives up to \$5,000 per year for three years—a maximum of \$15,000.
- Participants must make a three-year commitment to an LSC-funded program or repay LSC.

Preliminary data show the program is meeting its goals.

- More than 90 percent of the participants say financial pressure is a "significant" or "very significant" reason they would leave their jobs as legal aid lawyers.
- Two-thirds of the participants say loan repayment assistance makes it "significantly" or "very significantly" more likely that they will stay in their jobs.
- Two-thirds of the participants report that loan repayment assistance has "significantly improved" their financial situation or quality of life.